THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir. A South African public sector company has proposed a Joint Venture for cooperative efforts between South African and Indian Government Defence Production factories for artillery guns and related systems.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) It has been decided to discuss the proposal with the South African company.

Military exercises by Pakistan close to LOC in POK

5112. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan have conducted Military Exercise in the month of March, 2002 close to the Line of Control in Pak occupied Kashmir;

(b) if so, whether Government of India was informed in advance about this;

(c) whether Government have lodged any protest with the Pakistan Government in this regard; and

(d) the other details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) Pakistan Army conducted a two day brigade level exercise in the second week of March, 2002 in Kotli sector in Pakistan occupied Kashmir which is, 15—20 Km from the Line of Control.

As per the existing Agreement between India and Pakistan on Advance Notice on Military Exercise, no prior intimation is required for below Division level exercises.

Proposed strike by Civilian Employees of Ordance Factories

5113. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that civilian employees of Ordnance Factories propose to go on strike;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Criticism of Bullet Proof Jackets purchased by CAG

5114. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the news-item 'CAG blasts bullet proof jackets purchase' appearing in the 'Statesman' dated 31st March, 2002;

(b) if so, the details of this sub-standard defence purchase castigated by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India; and

(c) the action taken/proposed to be taken in this regard to identify person(s) responsible for the purchase and to initiate proceedings against them?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) relates to procurement of 32,800 bullet proof patkas whereas the news-item deals with bullet proof jackets.

(c) Does not arise in view of (b) above.

Stoppage of manufacturing spares by Russia for IAF Fleet

†5115. SHRI P. K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Russia have recently discontinued the manufacture of essential spare-part of the aircrafts supplied to Indian Air Force;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.